



U.S. Department of Justice

*United States Attorney
District of Maryland
Northern Division*

*Rod J. Rosenstein
United States Attorney*

*Vickie E. LeDuc
Public Information Officer*

*36 South Charles Street
Fourth Floor
Baltimore, Maryland 21201*

*410-209-4800
TTY/TDD: 410-962-4462
410-209-4885
FAX 410-962-3091
Vickie.LeDuc@usdoj.gov*

June 11, 2008

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

<http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/md>

**Contact AUSA VICKIE E. LEDUC or
MARCIA MURPHY at (410) 209-4885**

**U.S. COURT OF APPEALS UPHOLDS LIFE SENTENCES IN FEDERAL PRISON
FOR SOLOTHAL “ITCHY MAN” THOMAS AND EDWARD “BAM” COUNTLESS**

BALTIMORE, Maryland – The United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit yesterday issued an opinion upholding the convictions and sentences for Solothal Thomas, a/k/a “Itchy Man” and Edward Countess, a/k/a “Bam,” both 32, of Baltimore, announced United States Attorney for the District of Maryland Rod J. Rosenstein. Each man was sentenced on October 27, 2006, to serve a life sentence without parole in federal prison. They were convicted on July 6, 2006, on five counts relating to their participation in a 2001 murder-for-hire.

United States Attorney Rod J. Rosenstein stated, “These killers are now off the streets of Baltimore forever. Under Baltimore EXILE, we are pursuing the city's most violent repeat offenders and holding them accountable. Solothal Thomas and Edward Countess joined a growing list of armed Baltimore criminals whose careers in crime were stopped for good when they were exiled to federal prison. In the federal system, a life sentence means life in a federal prison far from home, with no probation and no parole.”

Evidence at the trial established that on October 2, 2001, Solothal Thomas and Edward Countess shot and killed Jesse Williams, then age 33, in the 8200 block of Courtland Manor Road in Baltimore County. Thomas and Countess ambushed Williams as he got into his car to go to work and shot him 15 times, pursuant to a contract murder ordered by a Baltimore City drug dealer in retaliation for a 1999 robbery. Thomas, Countess and three other men were paid a total of \$10,000 for their roles in planning and carrying out the murder.

Thomas and Countess were sentenced to three concurrent terms of life in prison for murder-for-hire; conspiracy to commit a murder-for-hire; and possession of a firearm in furtherance of a drug crime or violent crime resulting in death; 20 years concurrent for conspiracy to possess a firearm in furtherance of a drug crime or crime of violence; and mandatory consecutive 10 years for possession of a firearm in furtherance of a drug crime or violent crime. Countess was sentenced to an additional concurrent life term for conspiracy to distribute marijuana.

United States Attorney Rod J. Rosenstein praised the investigative work performed by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives; the Baltimore City Police Department; the Baltimore County Police Department; and the United States Attorney's Office. The U.S. Marshals Service also assisted in the apprehension of Solothal Thomas. Mr. Rosenstein also thanked Assistant U.S. Attorneys Jason M. Weinstein and Andrea L. Smith, who prosecuted the case.